

# Alaska State Legislature

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### HB 90- Vitamin D Supplements Sponsor Statement

Recent pediatric studies relating to vitamin D levels and infant development have added to growing evidence of the importance of vitamin D sufficiency in areas such as language, psychomotor, and mental development, demonstrating an association between low vitamin D levels in newborns and higher risks of mental and physical health problems. Furthermore they connect vitamin D deficiency to several factors relevant to Alaska such as northern latitude, skin pigmentation, and covering. Additional research has revealed that pregnant women with adequate vitamin D levels experience a lower rate of negative pregnancy outcomes.

**HB 90** is a temporary law establishing a two year health project to provide vitamin D testing, health information, and necessary supplementation for approximately 500 participating pregnant Alaskan women and their newborns. This project would give us data on the baseline vitamin D levels of these Alaskans while helping them avoid negative pregnancy outcomes and infant development issues. For instance, research in South Carolina by Dr. Wagner et al. has demonstrated that supplementing to sufficient levels of vitamin D during pregnancy can reduce the number of pre-term births to 7%, more than 2% *below* the March of Dimes 2020 goal of 9.6%.

The positive implications of HB 90 are not just improved health, but also economic savings. One preterm birth costs an average of \$55,000; in the proposed project group of 500 Alaskan women, a rate of reduction of preterm births similar to South Carolina would mean in savings of \$1,375,000.

Sufficient vitamin D is important to Alaskans' health and savings, but currently we only have a limited idea of what our levels are. This temporary health project will provide baseline data on a portion of our population while improving their health outcomes, and will be an important first step in establishing the health of the greater Alaskan population.